

MINUTES OF STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSING, SOCIAL INCLUSION & CORPORATE SERVICES on 15th September 2023 at 11.00 a.m. in the Townhall, Cavan.

In attendance:

- Cllr Trevor Smith, Chairperson
- Mr Eoin Doyle, Director of Service
- Mr John Wilson, Cavan County Council
- Ms Bridie McBrearty, Cavan County Council
- Ms Ramona McAvenue, Cavan County Council
- Cllr Paddy McDonald
- Cllr Patricia Walsh
- Cllr Madeleine Argue
- Mr P Elliott, Development and Construction

Apologies:

- Cllr Val Smith
- Cllr Clifford Kelly
- Ms Lynda McGavigan, Corporate & Human Resources
- Mr John Donohoe, Community & Enterprise

Cllr V Smith was unable to attend the meeting. On the proposal of Cllr P Walsh seconded by Cllr P McDonald it was agreed Cllr T Smith would Chair the meeting in Cllr V Smith's absence.

Cllr T Smith, Chairperson welcomed everybody to meeting.

30 MINUTES

Cllr P Walsh proposed the minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2023 and seconded by Cllr P McDonald.

40 SOCIAL INCLUSION UPDATE

Apologies received from J Donohoe. No social inclusion update.

50 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

B McBrearty gave an update on the affordable housing scheme and advised of the results of the affordable housing survey conducted in May 2023. E Doyle advised an affordable housing scheme in Cavan will only serve a small portion of the market and it is difficult to exactly determine how much income a household needs as there are many variables in the scheme to consider. The scheme will not service those already on the housing waiting list.

A discussion took place around the scheme's eligibility criteria. Only 30% of houses are reserved for those residing in the County. The remaining 70% can come from applicants not residing in the County but that qualify for the scheme. A further conversation took place on the Local Authority Home Loan.

60 HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT

J Wilson presented the report on the capital and void programme of work as follows:

- The current Local Authority New Build programme consists of 20 no. housing schemes for 319 units at various stages of planning, design, and construction. In 2023, 11 units have been completed and currently 108 units under construction.
- Approved Housing Bodies – 8 units at Drumalee Manor, Cavan were completed by Tuath in July 2023 and are in the process of being tenanted.
- The overall 'Housing for All' new build programme (LA & AHB) for 2022-2026 is 490 units. 98 units were delivered in 2022 and expected delivery for 2023 is 78 units.
- 7 no. house acquisitions have been completed this year to date. There are 13 acquisitions currently in process of being acquired. Improvement works have been completed to 5 no. vacant houses purchased in 2022. In addition, works are on-going to another 5 no. houses.
- Cavan County Council has returned 283 vacant houses back to use over the past 5 years. So far in 2023, 40 no. vacant units have been returned to use. In addition, work contracts have been awarded for the following 29 no. vacant houses.
- The Energy Retrofit Programme progress to date in 2023 – 6 no vacant houses have been retrofitted, 6 no. vacant houses are in the process of being retrofitted, 10 no. tenanted houses are in the process of being retrofitted. 30 no. tenanted houses are expected to commence shortly and be completed this year.
- Croi Conaithe (Towns) Fund
Stream 1 Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant - 157 applications received to date, 50 of which require further information and 74 applications are approved in principle and 1 no grant paid to date.

Cllr P Walsh acknowledged the good work done to date; with particular reference to returning vacant houses to use. Cllr P McDonald complimented Sinead Gibbs, Vacant Homes Officer for her work. Cllr T Smith and Cllr P Walsh echoed these sentiments also.

The Committee noted that two additional contractors had been added to the contractor's framework for works to council houses.

B McBrearty presented a report on progress in the housing office since previous meeting.

- Approved applicants for social housing support - 563 nett together with 574 on the transfer list making the total number approved 1137.
- A total of 938 have availed of the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and there are currently 429 total active tenancies. B McBrearty advised the Committee Cavan County Council's HAP Place Finder Service is now active and a new staff member has been assigned to the service.
- There are 341 household in accommodation provided under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and 131 through the Approved Housing Bodies.
- NTQs – 13 RAS, 15 HAP and 22 others on the social housing waiting list.
- CRTIS – 4 assess and gone to the Housing Agency. 1 not proceeding as house too expensive, 2 proceeding to offer stage and 1 being assessed.
- Allocations and new LA tenancies
2023 offers: 119 (104 accepted, 15 refusals)
2023 tenancies: 86
- The Council have had 122 homeless presentations to date and have provided accommodation to 33 households. B McBrearty advised the Council are looking at alternative options to deal with increasing numbers of homeless presentations and those moving to emergency accommodation.
- Currently 6 active Housing First Tenancies, 1 awaiting allocation.
- 21 loan applications received in 2023, 3 approvals in principle issued, 6 in progress.
- 16 applications received under the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme this year and are in progress.
- €1,551,980 is the total allocation for grants in 2023. The total committed expenditure at 01/09/23 is €3,409,061 (343 grants).
- Rent App is in use and 46 households are active.
- ASB – 105 complaints received since beginning of year, 81 cases closed. Regained possession of 3 abandoned properties, issues 2 Tenancy Warnings, 1 Exclusion Order and referred 9 cases for legal advice/action.

The Committee acknowledged the work done by the housing department in the area of anti-social behaviour and acknowledged Marty Lynch's contribution to housing during his role as Tenant Liaison Officer for the County. They wished him well in his new role in the Roads Department.

Cllr P McDonald noted the number of NTQs and the pressure the housing department are under. The Committee noted homelessness and rental termination notices are areas of major concern.

E Doyle advised of the work done by Cavan County Council to tackle the area of vacant houses in the County. He noted the money raised by the forthcoming Rent Review will provide extra funding when dealing with vacant local authority stock. He also advised it would not be possible for the Council to purchase all houses where there is a termination notice. To interfere in the private market in such a significant way would distort and possibly add to already increasing house prices.

70 HOUSING & DISABILITY STEERING GROUP MEETING REPORT

B McBrearty gave an update. She advised that a meeting was due on 6th October. At this meeting the Housing Agency will give a presentation on what is required from the steering group. To date in 2023, 15 households with disabilities have been given offers of accommodation, this equates to 26% of allocations.

80 AOB

An update was provided on the new procedures for Part VIII for Part 8 planning permissions in that such permissions no longer require the approval of the elected members.

E. Doyle informed the Committee that he had been advised that IPAS would hold a consultation meeting in the next week regarding Fairtown.

90 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: 8 December in the Council Chamber, Courthouse, Cavan.

Signed: _____
 Chairperson

Date: _____